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National Intelligence Daily

*Tuesday
16 February 1982*

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BELGIUM-US: Prime Minister's Visit

Prime Minister Martens, who arrives in Washington today, heads a government that is basically well disposed toward the US but is reluctant to use its limited domestic political capital for foreign affairs issues.

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Comment: The current coalition of Martens's Social Christians and the Liberals is somewhat more cohesive than its predecessors, but the Prime Minister knows that his economic austerity measures will strain the unity of the cabinet and increase Flemish-Walloon tensions. He will not want to take foreign policy positions that might cause additional political problems unless he can show quick gains for Belgium.

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Foreign Minister Tindemans, who will accompany Martens, has far more political power than his recent predecessors and may be willing to push forward on issues of interest to the US. He will try to demonstrate that the US consults him on major issues and listens carefully to his advice.

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Both Martens and Tindemans will reiterate their determination to move forward on INF deployment, and may commit themselves to make a public announcement that basing preparations are proceeding. They will emphasize, on the other hand, that they need tangible economic benefits from INF to gain Walloon Socialist acquiescence in deployment and to neutralize doubters in the Social Christian parties.

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Martens and Tindemans will convey Belgian and EC views on a wide range of political and economic issues. They will give assurances of Belgian support for US positions on Poland and cooperation in Zaire. They will be less forthcoming, however, on disputes between the EC and the US on steel import restrictions, trade, and interest rates.

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MEXICO-NICARAGUA: Exerting Political Pressure

5 Mexican President Lopez Portillo's new willingness to exert political leverage on the Sandinistas largely reflects concern about US intentions in the region. [redacted]

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1 The Sandinistas on Sunday released three jailed Nicaraguan private-sector leaders who had been given seven-month sentences last October for criticizing the regime. Lopez Portillo, long encouraged by Mexican business organizations to act on this matter, reportedly made freeing the three officials a precondition for his visit to Nicaragua next week. [redacted]

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2 3 4 The Mexican Ambassador in Washington has told US officials that Lopez Portillo also has secured a promise from the Sandinistas to reconsider US proposals made last August, which called for a halt to arms shipments to El Salvador and limits on Nicaraguan military growth. The Ambassador stated that Lopez Portillo will strongly express during his visit Mexico's disapproval of the Nicaraguan arms buildup. [redacted]

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5 Comment: This is the first time that Mexico--the Sandinistas' most generous financial supporter and a steadfast political ally--has been willing to use private pressure to promote its goal of moderating Sandinista behavior. Mexico's efforts to wrest concessions from the Sandinistas on their military buildup and assistance to the Salvadoran rebels are motivated primarily by growing alarm in Mexico City that the US will move aggressively against the Sandinistas and become more deeply involved militarily in El Salvador. [redacted]

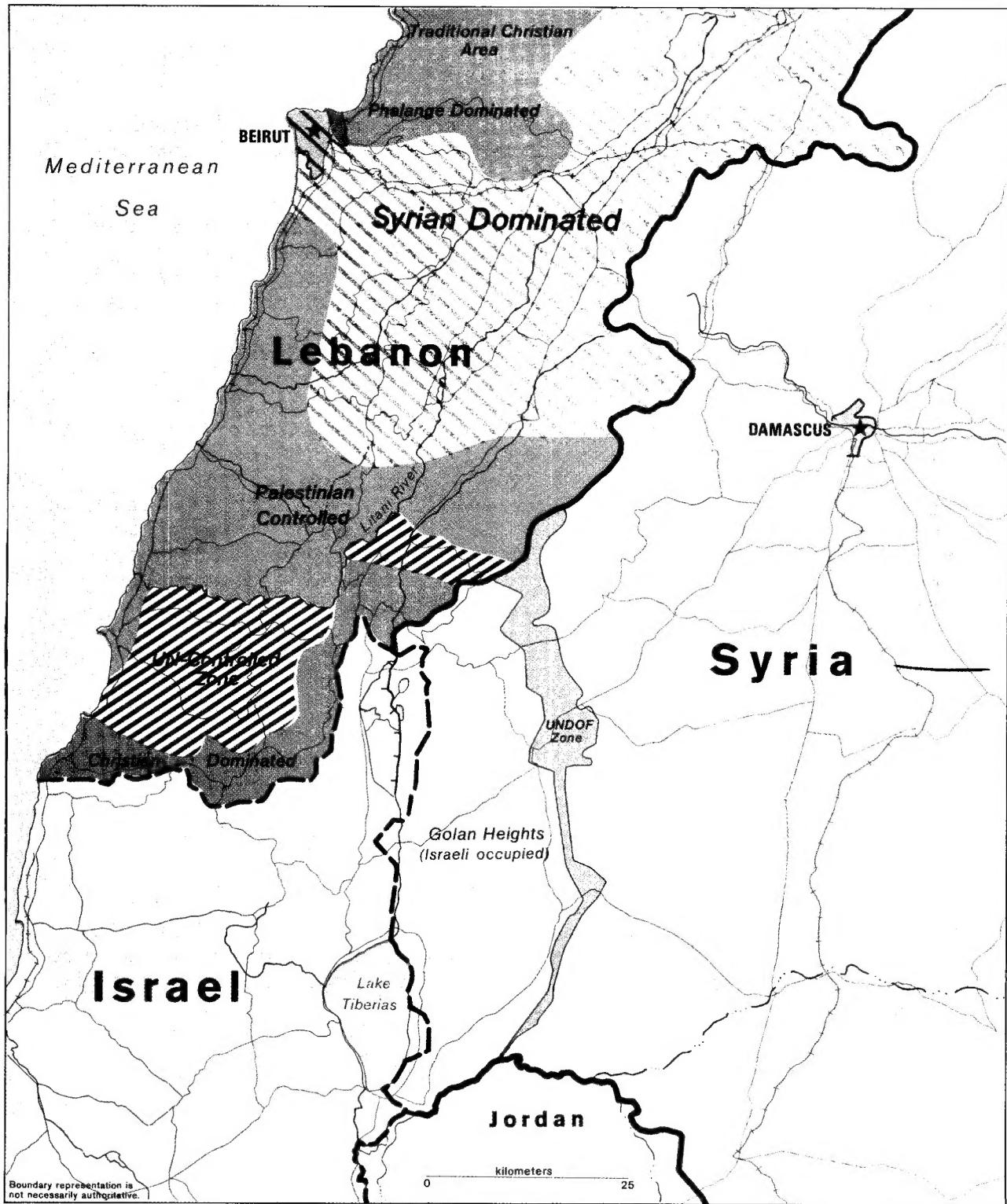
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ISRAEL-LEBANON: Border Situation

The Israel-Lebanon border remained quiet over the weekend, and no significant Israeli troop movements or preparations for imminent hostilities were noted in the area [redacted]. Israeli-supported Lebanese militia leader Haddad, who backed off from his threat to send a column into the UN zone to attack Palestinian positions on Saturday, reportedly was admitted to an Israeli hospital yesterday for exhaustion. Meanwhile, in a speech to the Knesset yesterday, Israeli Prime Minister Begin attacked the proposed sale of US advanced fighter aircraft and air defense equipment to Jordan. The Foreign Ministry later said the matter would be raised today when Ambassador Arens presents his credentials to President Reagan.

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Comment: If the Israelis had, in fact, been planning a major attack into southern Lebanon over the weekend, it may have been called off because of heavy rains on Saturday and Sunday.

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